

3. Historic & Cultural Resources

Introduction

This chapter of the inventory identifies and describes Hingham's many historic and cultural resources, and the efforts to preserve, promote and enhance them. Historic and cultural resources include both physical resources [architecture, landscapes, and archaeological sites (both historic and pre-historic)] as well as non-physical resources (organizations, clubs, programs, events and traditions), both of which contribute to the quality of life of residents. This chapter includes:



- A description of **existing conditions and trends** associated with historic and cultural resources:
 - A brief history of Hingham and an overview of the town's extant historic resources;
 - A synopsis of past and current efforts to preserve historic and cultural resources; and
 - A description of the many historic and cultural organizations based in Hingham;
- Regional considerations pertaining to historic and cultural resources; and
- A summary of **issues and challenges** related to historic and cultural resources to be considered in the 2020 Master Plan.

Beginning in the Colonial Period (1675-1775), the abundance of timber provided raw material for the barrel and bucket-making. Cooperage, including manufacturing of the "Hingham Bucket," became one of Hingham's dominant cottage industries. (Hingham Historical Society collection)

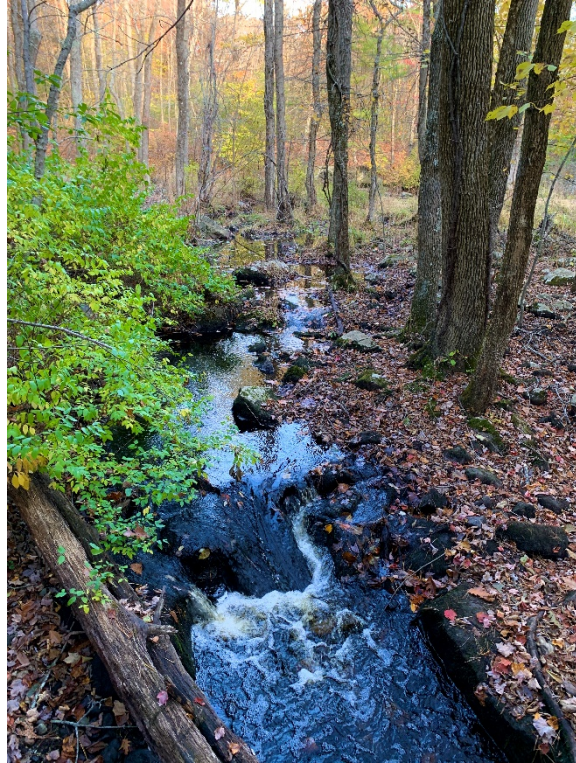
Existing Conditions and Trends

HINGHAM'S HISTORY AND ITS SURVIVING HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES¹

CONTACT PERIOD (BEFORE 1620)

The well-protected shallow harbor, coastal plains, fertile river valley, and adjacent upland areas that would become known as Hingham have drawn humans for centuries. Native Americans – members of the Massachusetts tribe -- survived on the diverse food resources of the coastal clam flats, Weir River, and upland grasslands and forests. They also established two major trail systems, a coastal route (Fort Hill, South, Main, East and Hull Streets) and interior route (along the axis of Whiting Street, Route 53). Native American materials have been located in several locations of town, and burials have been uncovered along the shore, on the harbor islands, and along the Weir River outlet.

While little visible evidence of Native American settlement remains, several place-names in use today serve as reminders of these indigenous peoples. Wompatuck State Park, located in the south part of Hingham, was named for Josiah Wompatuck, sachem of the Mattakeeset tribe of the Wampanoags. The names of nearby Assinippi ("rocks in water"), Nantasket ("at the strait"), Cohasset (derived from Conahassett or "long rocky place"), and Scituate (derived from Satuit or "cold brook") were borrowed from indigenous language.



The Wompatuck State Park, located in the south part of Hingham, was named for the Mattakeeset sachem of the same name.

FIRST SETTLEMENT PERIOD (1620-1675)

Between 1633 and 1639 approximately 200 people emigrated from the Hingham area of East Anglia, England and settled in the area known as Bare Cove and eastward along North Street, bringing with them native customs and traditions. They preferred a nuclear settlement and thus established a neat, organized village with assigned houselots along South, North, Lincoln and Main Streets. They farmed, planted orchards, built grist and saw mills, and set up cottage industries such as tanning and coopering, rather than engaging in maritime-related pursuits. Just two years after they arrived, the newcomers incorporated their settlement and changed its name to Hingham. The town's geographic limits included today's Town of Cohasset.²

¹ Resources for the historical narrative include the Massachusetts Historical Commission Reconnaissance Survey for Hingham, the Hingham Planning Department's Historical Timeline, and several books on local history. Refer to the "List of Sources" at the end of this section for specific titles.

² Cohasset was known as the Second Parish of Hingham until it incorporated as a separate town in 1770.

One of few structures from the First Settlement Period known to remain in Hingham today is the General Benjamin Lincoln House (1630s), located at 181 North Street. Portions of several other houses may exist as part of newer additions, such as the Enoch Whiton House (1083 Main Street). Extant landscape features include the layouts of Pleasant, High, Free, Prospect and Scotland Streets, as well as Hingham's oldest known place of interment, the Hingham Cemetery, established in 1672.



The Hingham Cemetery, established in 1672, is one of Hingham's oldest extant historic resources. (MACRIS photograph)

COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

The town's population grew steadily between 1675 and 1775, reaching a total of 2,506 in 1765 due, in part, to settlers from Scituate migrating northward to the southern end of Hingham. Settlement expanded to South Hingham where a secondary village was built, as well as to Liberty Plain and to Queen Anne's Corner where farming and milling operations, respectively, took place. Hingham's economy continued to center on farming and grazing, and increasingly on lumbering. By the early 1700s, several mills operated on Cushing and Triphammer Ponds, manufacturing framing lumber, boards, clapboards and shingles, and timber for shipbuilding. They also produced materials for cooperage, which became the dominant cottage industry, making the regionally known "Hingham Bucket." Near the end of the Colonial Period, a small commercial fishing industry had emerged.

Over 120 houses and other structures in Hingham date to the Colonial Period, with the bulk of these having been constructed after 1700. Contemporary alterations have been made to some. Most are vernacular style central chimney Cape Cod cottages and central chimney houses, along with some twin-chimney houses. Examples include the Seth Sprague House (1730, 514 Main Street) and David Lincoln House (1737, 66 Lincoln Street). Several high-style structures also exist, including the Georgian style Rev. Daniel Shute House (1745, 768 Main Street) and Peter Jacob House (1752, 648 Main Street). The most prominent structure from this period is the Old Ship Meetinghouse (1681, 90 Main Street), believed to be the only remaining Puritan meetinghouse in the



The Old Ship Meetinghouse, built in 1681, is believed to be the only remaining Puritan meetinghouse in the United States. It is a National Historic Landmark. (MACRIS photograph)

United States. A second church, the Old South Meetinghouse (655 Main Street), was built in 1742 to serve the growing population in this part of Hingham.

FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

Hingham's population remained roughly the same until the last twenty years of the period, when it grew by 1,000, reaching a total of just over 3,000 in 1830. While the ethnicity of the population remained static, new religious entities were established, including Methodist, Baptist and Universalist Churches. Construction of new homes and businesses largely took place in the established village clusters. The economic base shifted towards fishing and associated spin-off industries, including copper and brass ship hardware, ship chandlery, saltworks for the preservation of fish, and cordage. Umbrella and parasol manufacturing also took place as did several commercial ventures, including a newspaper, *The Hingham Gazette*, beginning in 1827.

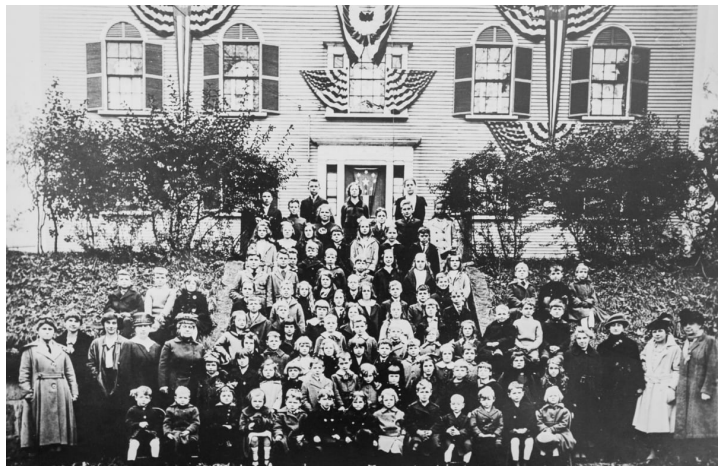
Houses built during the Federal Period reflect both vernacular and high-styles, and over 130 remain today.

Vernacular structures, as typified by the Aram Carlye House (ca. 1775, 16 East Street) and Stephen Stodder House (1781, 91-93 Fort Hill Street) include central chimney cottages and double houses, many with fine entry surrounds. High-style homes, such as

the Samuel Norton House (1785, 45 Fearing Street) and Capt. Moses L. Humphrey House (ca. 1790, 38 Cottage Street) are hip-roofed with symmetrical facades, ornamented with decorative mouldings. The Methodist Episcopal Meeting House (1828, 235 North Street), First Baptist Church (1829, 89 Main Street), and First Universalist Society Meeting House (1829, 196 North Street) were all built during the Federal Period, each exhibiting period architectural details. A fourth house of worship, the New North Meetinghouse (1807, 1 Lincoln Street) is attributed to architect Charles Bulfinch. In 1784, Derby Academy, the oldest private coeducational school in the United States was established in Hingham, and its ca. 1818 Federal style building remains at 34 Main Street (now headquarters of the Hingham Historical Society).



The New North Meetinghouse, located on Lincoln Street, was built in 1807 and its design is attributed to architect Charles Bulfinch. (Hingham Historical Society collection)



Derby Academy, opened in 1784, is the oldest private coeducational school in the United States. (Hingham Historical Society collection)

EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

The mid 19th century brought the first influx of immigrants, mostly from Ireland, increasing the population to over 4,300 in 1870. Transportation routes improved, including the opening of the South Shore Railroad in 1849, passing through Hingham Center on route from Braintree to Cohasset. Most new building continued to take place in the existing village centers, with resort development emerging in the late 1860 near the coast. Production of wood products and cordage continued, with the C. A. Wilder Company and Hingham Cordage Company, respectively, dominating the industry. Iron-based manufacturers, including the Eagle Iron Foundry and Weymouth Iron Company, produced nails, hammers, edge tools, ploughs, guns, scales and balances. Industries also produced wool and silk, shoes, as well as accessories for boats produced by the Burr, Brown and Company (upholstery, fringe, tassels). Commercial fishing continued, with the Clams, Oysters and Plum Pudding Corporation (C. O. & P. P.) forming in 1855, but by the late 19th century this industry had begun to decline.

Americans developed a keen interest in horticulture and scientific farming during the Early Industrial Period, and Hingham participated in earnest. In 1858, The Hingham Agricultural and Horticultural Society formed, a group of local men and women, many of whom were involved in industry, trade, and commerce associated with farming and plant propagation. In 1863, Hingham resident Fearing Burr published *Field and Garden Vegetables of America*, and in 1867 the Agricultural and Horticultural Society built an agricultural hall (no longer extant). In keeping with this movement, proprietors of the Hingham Cemetery upgraded the grounds by shaping the topography, sculpting terraces, laying out roads and paths, planting specimen trees, and adding other prominent features, including the Soldiers' and Sailors' monument, dedicated in 1871.



*Loring Hall, built in 1851/2, was designed by architect Ammi B. Young.
(Hingham Historical Society collection)*

Early Industrial Period structures were built in the Greek Revival, Italianate and Victorian Gothic styles, and several hundred still remain. Examples of homes include the Charles Seymour House (1838, 136 Main Street), Elijah Whiton House (1857, 2-4 Friend Street), Hayward House (ca. 1870, 137 Fort Hill Street), and Ezra Wilder House (1841, 567 Main Street). Several institutional buildings went up including the Hingham Mutual Fire Insurance Company (1860/9, 49 Main Street) and Loring Hall designed by architect Ammi B. Young (1851/2, 65 Main Street).

LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

The town's population remained relatively steady during the 45-year period between 1870 and 1915, however the number of Irish and Italian-born immigrants continued to increase and by 1915, comprised 20% of Hingham's population. The railroad continued to operate and beginning in 1880, a new extension transported passengers to Nantasket (via the Nantasket Beach Railroad). The Hingham Street Railway, opened in 1896, ran from Hingham Square to Queen Anne's Corner, connecting to Hull and Weymouth. The town's industrial economy peaked in 1875 and by the end of the 1800s, most manufacturing had ended. Hingham began to evolve into a largely residential community.

Hingham retains roughly 300 buildings and other structures dating to this period. Architecture reflects the Victorian Gothic, Queen Anne, neo-Tudor and other late Victorian styles, with new buildings scattered throughout the town. Summer cottages built in the Victorian Gothic style appeared on the west side of Hingham Harbor (Crow Point area), while larger estate homes, designed by architects in the Queen Anne, neo-Tudor and other period styles, were concentrated in the north and west part of town. Examples of estates include the E. A. Hill House/carriage house (ca. 1889, 22/34 Martin's Lane) and Francis Willard Brewer's Great Hill (1898, 161 New



The E. A. Hill estate, including the house and carriage house, was built in the late 1880s on Martin's Lane. (MACRIS photograph)

Brewer's Great Hill (1898, 161 New Bridge Street). Several architect-designed homes were also constructed along the north part of Main Street in Second Empire, Queen Anne and Federalist Revival styles. The town saw the addition of several institutional buildings, extant today. These include Wilder Memorial Hall (1879, 666 Main Street), the Ames Memorial Chapel (1887, Hingham Cemetery, designed by J. Sumner Fowler), and (former) Hingham Town Office Building (1913, 14 Main Street, now private offices).

EARLY MODERN AND MODERN PERIODS (1915-TODAY)

Hingham's population increased gradually between 1915 and 1940, and rapidly escalated between 1945 and 1965. Contributing to this increase was the replacement of streetcars with improved and new highway corridors, including Routes 3 and 3A. In 1978, the first Hingham to Boston commuter boat began service, and in 2007, the Greenbush Railroad line, constructed in the path of the South Shore Railroad, began transporting passengers directly to South Station in Boston. Beginning in 1909, several Navy facilities operated out of Hingham, including a magazine at Bare Cove (1909), a Bethlehem Steel shipyard at Hewitts (Huets) Cove (1940s), and Naval Ammunition Depot Annex, located at what would become, in 1973, Wompatuck State Park. Each of these facilities contributed to the local economic base but are no longer in operation today.

One of the most influential 20th century efforts to preserve Hingham's cultural heritage and natural beauty took place in 1967, when The Trustees of Reservations (TTOR) acquired Hingham's northeastern-most peninsula, protecting it from development and reserving the 251-acre site as a park. Owned and operated as a gentleman's farm by businessman John Brewer, World's End was, in the 1890s considered for a large residential subdivision, and in the 1940s, a location for the United Nations. Through the efforts of Hingham residents and others from surrounding towns, TTOR was able to purchase the site, protect it from development, and provide a publicly accessible open space for recreational use during all seasons.

Architecture of the early 20th century was modest in scale and designed in the bungalow, eclectic, and Colonial Revival styles as exemplified by the houses at 7 Burton's Lane (ca. 1920) and 83 Central Street (ca. 1920) (both bungalows). Later, "McMansions" appeared.³ Commercial development increased along major highways, and a "lifestyle center" complex was built on Derby Street. Beginning in 2003, Hingham approved the first phases of construction of "The Shipyard," a large mixed use development at the site of the former Bethlehem Steel shipyard. This multi-story complex with market-rate and affordable housing units and first-floor commercial space aims to broaden Hingham's economic base and provide greater equity in the housing market. The tall buildings, large massing, and expansive parking lots of the Shipyard, the Alliance/Broadstone development on Beal Street, and the recent Avalon development on Route 3A are in stark contrast with the 17th, 18th and 19th century human-scale character of much Hingham.



World's End, a 251-acre open space at the northeast end of Hingham has been preserved as an open space for public use by The Trustees of Reservations.

STATE AND NATIONAL REGISTERS OF HISTORIC PLACES

Hingham has nominated and successfully listed of four individual resources and two districts to the National Register of Historic Places. Inclusion on the National Register is honorary, however the designation can protect listed properties from the negative effects of federally funded projects, such as roadway and bridge construction. The individual properties and districts are as follows:

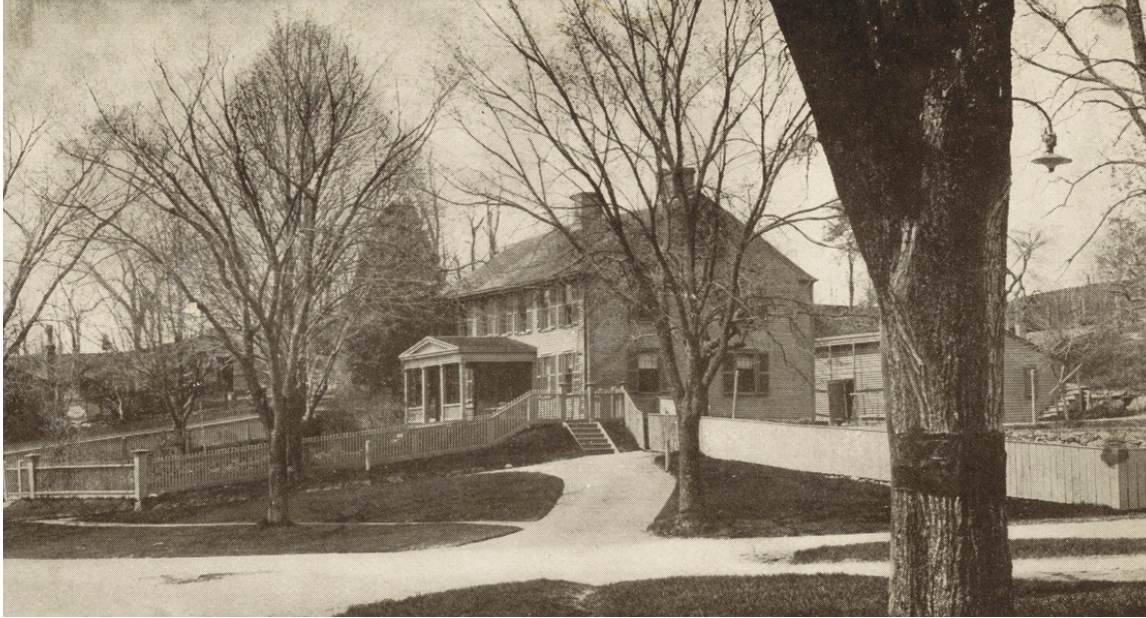
Individual Properties

- Thomas Chubbuck, Jr. House (listed in 1992), 1191 Main Street
- Cushing Homestead (listed in 1973), East Street

³ The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines McMansion as, "a very large house usually built in a suburban neighborhood or development; especially one regarded critically as oversized and ostentatious."

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- General Benjamin Lincoln House (listed in 1972), 181 North Street
- Old Ship Meetinghouse (listed in 1966), Main Street)



General Benjamin Lincoln Homestead, located at 181 North Street is a National Historic Landmark, and is individually listed on both the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Historic New England holds a preservation restriction on the property, and portions of the house are believed to date to the 1630s. (Hingham Public Library collection)

Districts

- **Lincoln National Register Historic District** (1990), encompasses Hingham's Downtown and overlays two Local Historic Districts, the Lincoln District (including extensions) and the Bachelor's Row/Pear Tree Hill District.
- **South Hingham National Register Historic District** (1998), includes properties along Main Street between Cushing Street and Tower Brook Road, as well as the properties in the Tower-Wilder, Glad Tidings and Liberty Plain Local Historic Districts (discussed later in this chapter).

In addition to these, five other districts have been determined by the Massachusetts Historical Commission as eligible for the National Register: (1) Fort Hill, (2) Beal/East Street, (3) Barnes Area/Old Colony Hill, (4) Hersey-Elm-Central Streets and (5) Matthew Cushing (East-Summer Streets).

Many of Hingham's resources have also been listed on the State Register of Historic Places, a comprehensive listing of the buildings, structures, objects and sites that have received local, state or national designations based on their historical or archaeological significance. Listings for Hingham include the established Local and National Register Historic Districts, as well as many individual properties. A complete listing of State Register properties can be found in the Massachusetts Cultural Resources Information System (MACRIS), maintained by the Massachusetts Historical Commission.⁴

⁴ <http://mhc-macris.net>

LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Hingham established its first Local Historic District in 1966, the Lincoln Historic District (LHD), comprised of 20 historic properties at the intersection of Lincoln and North Streets, for the purpose of preserving both the structures and their settings. Since then the town has expanded the Lincoln District several times, and has added five other LHDs, bringing the total number of protected properties to 574. In addition to preserving the historical integrity of the properties, the LHDs aim to increase public awareness of Hingham's cultural and historic heritage. All alterations to LHD properties visible from a public way, including buildings and their settings, are reviewed by the Hingham Historic Districts Commission (discussed later in this chapter), through a Certificate of Appropriateness process. The six established districts, including extensions, are as follows:

- ***Lincoln Historic District (1966, 1988, 1998).*** Hingham's first and largest Local Historic District, the Lincoln District was approved in 1966, and extended three times, once in 1988 (Phase I Extension) and twice ten years later in 1998 (Phases II and III Extensions). It includes 284 resources located along North, South, Main, and Lincoln Streets. The district has also been recognized at the federal level as part of the larger Lincoln National Register Historic District.
- ***Glad Tidings Historic District (1975).*** Located along Main Street, the Glad Tidings District contains 35 properties. Included in the district are Wilder Hall and the distinctive linear common known as Glad Tidings Plain. The district has also been recognized at the federal level as part of the larger South Hingham National Register Historic District.
- ***Tower-Wilder Historic District (1987, 1988).*** Developed in two phases, this district includes a total of 51 properties, 25 located along Main Street from Crooked Meadow River south to the north side of Tower Brook Road, and 26 properties along both sides of Main Street to the boundary of the Glad Tidings district. Notable resources in this district include the High Street Cemetery and the "Rainbow Roof" House. The district has also been recognized at the federal level as part of the larger South Hingham National Register Historic District.
- ***Bachelor's Row/Pear Tree Hill Historic District (1988).*** This 82-resource district encompasses the portion of Main Street between South Street and Garrison Road. The district has also been recognized at the Federal level, as part of the Lincoln National Register Historic District.
- ***Liberty Plain Historic District (1988).*** Bounded by Prospect Street on the north side, and Pine and Grove Roads on the south, this district encompasses 36 properties. The district includes the Liberty Plain Cemetery, final resting place of many Revolutionary War soldiers. The district has also been recognized at the federal level as part of the larger South Hingham National Register Historic District.
- ***Hingham Centre Historic District (1990, 2008).*** Bounded by Main, Pleasant and Middle Street, this district, established in two phases, includes 86 properties.

PRESERVATION RESTRICTIONS AND EASEMENTS

Additional protections for several of Hingham's historic properties have been secured through preservation restrictions and easements. Such instruments, held by the Massachusetts Historical

Commission (MHC), Town of Hingham or Historic New England (HNE) provide legal protection from both interior and exterior alterations that do not comply with the U. S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Preservation of Historic Properties. Past and present restriction or easement-protected properties include:

- Thomas Chubbuck, Jr. House, 1191 Main Street (MHC)
- Cushing Homestead, 210 East Street (MHC)
- W. Allan Gay House, 262 South Street (Town of Hingham Historical Commission)
- Lincoln House, 182 North Street (HNE)
- General Benjamin Lincoln House, 181 North Street (HNE)
- Memorial Bell Tower, 68R Main Street (MHC)
- Old Ship Meetinghouse, Main Street (MHC)
- Perez Whiting House, 1231 Main Street (MHC)
- John Leavitt Homestead, 133 Leavitt Street (Town of Hingham Historical Commission)

MUNICIPAL CAPACITY (PUBLIC HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS)

HINGHAM HISTORICAL COMMISSION

The Hingham Historical Commission is the Town's agency responsible for identifying, evaluating and protecting the historic, architectural and archaeological resources of the town. The town voted to form the seven-member Hingham Historical Commission in 1974. In addition to maintaining the Town's Inventory of Historic, Architectural and Archaeological Assets, administering the Demolition Delay Bylaw, the Greenbush Preservation Trust and the Preservation Projects Fund, the commission provides educational materials to owners of historic homes, publishes books and other written material on the town's historic assets, sponsors an annual historic essay award for high school students, and recently launched an annual Historic Preservation Awards program.

CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROGRAM

Hingham is one of 25 cities and towns in Massachusetts enrolled in the Certified Local Government Program (CLG), an effort that assists local governments in becoming more directly involved with identifying, evaluating, protecting, promoting and enhancing the educational and economic value of local properties of historic, architectural and archeological significance. The program requires that the Massachusetts Historical Commission designate at least 10 percent of its annual Historic Preservation Fund allocation from the U. S. Department of the Interior to municipalities that have become Certified Local Governments. Hingham was awarded CLG status in 1996 by the U. S. Department of the Interior and the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

INVENTORY OF HISTORIC, ARCHITECTURAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSETS

To date, through the efforts of the Historical Commission, Hingham has inventoried over 1,500 areas, properties and other historic resources including buildings, structures, objects and landscapes (sites). Each appears on the state's listing of cultural resources (MACRIS) as well as the town's *Comprehensive Community Inventory of Historic, Architectural and Archaeological Assets*. For many of these resources, the associated written inventory forms have been scanned and uploaded into the MACRIS, making the forms available for download for anyone with access to the Internet. The forms detail the history of the properties, architects/builders, and profiles of original owners, to the extent known. All resources

included on the inventory that are not located in one of the Town's historic districts are under the jurisdiction of the Historical Commission.

DEMOLITION DELAY BYLAW

Hingham adopted a Demolition Delay Bylaw in 1988 for the purposes of "protecting the historic and aesthetic qualities of the town by preserving, rehabilitating or restoring whenever possible, buildings or structures which constitute or reflect distinctive features of the architectural or historic resources of the town, thereby promoting the public welfare and preserving the cultural heritage of the town."

Administered by the Hingham Historical Commission, the Bylaw may be used to delay removal of an historically significant structure for up to six months. "Significant" is defined as any resource (1) listed or determined eligible for listing on the National or State Registers of Historic Places; (2) located within 200 feet of the boundary of any federal state or local historic district; or (3) appearing on the town's *Comprehensive Community Inventory of Historic, Architectural and Archaeological Assets*. The Historical Commission has had some successes in saving historic structures through enforcement of the Bylaw since its inception, however the relatively short delay period has more often prompted property owners to simply endure the sixth months and then proceed with demolition.

HINGHAM GREENBUSH HISTORIC PRESERVATION TRUST

This \$3.5 million special fund was established through a memorandum of understanding between the town and MBTA in conjunction with the implementation of the Greenbush Rail Project. Adopted by the Historical Commission in 2009, the fund is administered by the commission through the Town Treasurer. The Trust provides up to \$100,000 per year to fund projects proposed by the town, individuals and private non-profit organizations along the Greenbush rail right-of-way to preserve historic resources within the existing National Register and Local Historic Districts, as well as five districts that have been determined eligible for listing on the National Register. These include the (1) Fort Hill, (2) Beal/East Street, (3) Barnes Area/Old Colony Hill, (4) Hersey-Elm-Central Streets, and (5) Matthew Cushing (East-Summer Street) Districts. Applicants must own or hold a lease on the property or resource. Since its adoption the Trust has awarded over \$700,000 for 46 projects. Examples include accessibility upgrades to historic buildings, restoration, stabilization and protection of historic properties, and landscape and hardscape improvements.

PRESERVATION PROJECTS FUND

This fund was established in 1989 by an agreement between the Historical Commission and the Town Treasurer. Under Chapter 40 Section 8D of Massachusetts General Law, the Commission was established to preserve and protect the historical assets of the town. To this end, the Commission is empowered to conduct relevant research and surveys, and to coordinate the activities of unofficial bodies organized for similar purposes, to prepare, publish and distribute books and other materials which it deems necessary for its work. The Commission is also empowered to accept gifts, contributions and bequests of funds from individuals, foundations and from federal, state or other governmental bodies for the purpose of furthering its program. The Preservation Projects Fund is regularly used to provide educational programs and signage, maintain the town's historic assets, including the Memorial Bell Tower, sculptures such as the Seated Lincoln in Fountain Square and Victory at the harbor, and the many monuments and markers throughout town. The fund also supports the town's annual Preservation Award.

HINGHAM HISTORIC DISTRICTS COMMISSION

Formed in 1974 in accordance with the provisions in Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40C, the ten-member Hingham Historic Districts Commission works to preserve the historical and architectural legacy of the town by reviewing the appropriateness of all proposed exterior alterations and renovations of historic properties and the design of any new construction located within the town's Local Historic Districts (discussed above). Members are appointed by the Board of Selectmen, and as set forth in the Historic Districts By-Law, commission is comprised of five voting members and five alternate members and must include in each group of five, an architect, one designee each from the Planning Board and Historical Society, a resident of an historic district, and one at-large member.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION ADMINISTRATOR

The Town of Hingham employs a full-time Historic Preservation Administrator. The position supports both the Historical and Historic Districts Commissions.

HINGHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY

Established in 1771 and known as the first Social Library, the Hingham Public Library lies at the intersection of Leavitt and East Streets. Built in 1966, the library expanded in 2000 into the adjacent Town Hall building, after the latter moved to Central Street. As a result, much of the library occupies former office space, a layout that has proved inefficient, unsuitable, and beyond its capacity to accommodate the library's many functions. In addition to providing reference and circulation services, it also serves, with the Hingham Historical Society, as an historical and cultural hub. Programs serve over 20,000 children, teens, adults and seniors, and provide 190,000 wireless connections each year. It also operates a gallery on the first floor and manages a local history collection with its own dedicated librarian.

The library also maintains a small climate-controlled area to store important and fragile town documents. There are, however, many town documents dating back to 1633 that are housed in offices, storerooms and other facilities, the environments of which are not suited to preserving these original and irreplaceable documents. Additional storage is desperately needed. Hingham formed two entities in the recent past to address specific concerns, the Historical Archives Task Force and the Foss Memorial Committee. While these committees no longer function, their legacy remains, as follows:

- ***Historical Archives Task Force.*** This ad hoc committee was established following the 2001 Master Plan to address the care of historic documents relating to town affairs. Working with the Hingham Historical Society and Hingham Public Library, the task force was able to secure a total of \$264,611 in Community Preservation Act money for preserving town documents and photographs between 2008 and 2015.
- ***Foss Memorial Committee.*** This volunteer committee was established to oversee the installation and maintenance of the Foss Memorial, a bronze bust of Spanish-American War veteran, Congressional Medal of Honor recipient and long-time Hingham resident Herbert L. Foss. The sculpture, created by artist Susan Leury and completed in 2017, stands inside the main entrance to the Intermodal Center, located at the Hingham Shipyard. Foss died in 1937 and is interred at the Fort Hill Cemetery.

For more information about the facility, programs and services of the library, refer to the Public Services and Facilities chapter of this inventory.

PAST EFFORTS TO PRESERVE AND PROMOTE HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

HINGHAM ZONING BYLAW

In 1939, Hingham adopted its first Zoning Bylaw as a means for managing the distribution of growth⁵. Since then the town has made many amendments to the law, several of which were written to protect historic character and cultural resources, including two overlay districts:

- ***Downtown Hingham Overlay District***, established to “protect and promote the viability and value of business and residential properties located in the Downtown...in a manner consistent with Hingham’s historic character.” Among several objectives, the district aims to make Downtown a visitor destination for historic sightseeing; to encourage maintenance of existing historic structures in a manner consistent with Hingham’s historic character; and to preserve and/or complement the visual context of the streetscape.
- ***Hingham Harbor Overlay District***, established to “promote access to and the use and enjoyment of the land and water along Hingham’s inner harbor, while protecting and enhancing its cultural, scenic and natural character.” Among several objectives, the district aims to promote aesthetic harmony between structures; and to promote and enhance connections between the inner harbor and Downtown Hingham.

TOWN OF HINGHAM MASTER PLAN (2001)

The update of a 1968 plan, Hingham’s 2001 Master Plan included specific goals and objectives relating to historic and cultural resources. The goals focused on mitigating the impacts of the Greenbush commuter rail, expanding historic resource protections, identifying and protecting scenic roads, and providing adequate administrative staffing to accomplish these goals. Recommendations included the nine outlined below. The extent to which the town successfully implemented each recommendation, if known, is shown in italics.

1. Devise suitable Greenbush Line mitigation measures. *As a result of lengthy negotiations with the MBTA, the town secured a \$3.5 million endowment to preserve historic resources along the rail line right-of-way. The Greenbush Historic Preservation Trust is discussed later in this chapter.*
2. Expand the Hingham Centre Historic District. *The Hingham Centre Historic District, established in 1966, was expanded in three phases, once in 1988, and twice in 1989, to include a total of 284 properties. Since the completion of the 2001 Master Plan, additional expansions have not taken place.*

⁵ Other sources date the adoption of this law at 1941.

3. Add the Fort Hill Street Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places. *While determined eligible for listing on the National Register, a nomination for the Fort Hill Street district had not been completed.*
4. Add the proposed Beal Area/East Street Historic District to Hingham's protected historic districts. *While determined eligible for protection, either as a National Register and/or Local Historic District, the Beal Area/East Street district has not been so designated.*
5. Identify additional historic resources in need of protection due to growth pressures.
6. Identify and protect properties not previously listed which are now at least fifty years old. *Hingham has continued to update its inventory of historic and cultural resources, to include properties that reach the 50-year mark.*
7. Identify additional scenic roads and valued streetscapes for designation and protection (current designations at the time included Lazell Street/Union Street, Free Street, Turkey Hill Lane/Pope's Lane/a portion of Leavitt Street. *As of 2020, the town had designated two additional roads as scenic, South Pleasant Street and Martins Lane, and had adopted a set of rules and regulations under the Scenic Road Act (M.G.L. Chapter 40, Section 15C).*
8. Assess changes to the historic character of the town due to growth and change of landscape.
9. Provide adequate administrative staffing resources. *Staffing for both the Historical Commission and Historic District Commissions is managed by one full-time staff administrator, with some support from the Planning Department's administrative assistant, and the administrator handles 60 to 70 applications for changes within the historic districts each year.*

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS

National Historic Landmarks are historic places that the U. S. Secretary of the Interior has determined to hold national significance and have an exceptional ability to illustrate American heritage. Nearly 2,600 properties, resources and sites have received this designation, 189 of which are in Massachusetts, with two in Hingham.⁶

Old Ship Church (listed in 1960). Located atop a promontory and adjacent to the town's first burial ground, this house of worship is believed to be the oldest church in the nation still used for religious services and the only remaining Puritan meetinghouse. Its name derives from its construction, which resembles an inverted wooden ship hull. Since its initial construction in 1681, the church has been enlarged and retrofitted several times, and today contains its original 18th century wooden stalls and one of its most prominent original features – a "hammerbeam" roof. Unitarian Universalist services are held in the church each Sunday, except in summer months.

⁶ Massachusetts ranks second in number of National Historic Landmarks; New York holds 273.

Benjamin Lincoln House (listed in 1972).

Located 181 North Street near the center of Hingham, this two-story home may be one of the oldest wood frame structures in the U. S. It was the birthplace and principal residence of Continental Army Major General Benjamin Lincoln (1733–1810), a prominent military leader of the American Revolutionary War. The house has portions that are said to date to the 1630s, with significant additions made principally during the 18th century. The last major modifications to the house were probably undertaken by General Lincoln in the late 18th century, and the property has remained in the Lincoln family since its construction. A preservation restriction on the property, held by Historic New England, helps assure that any exterior and interior changes are in keeping with the U. S. Secretary of the Interior’s standards.



Old Ship Church, ca. 1880. Historic New England collection.

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT

The Community Preservation Act (M.G.L.

Chapter 44B) (“CPA”), a local option statute enacted by the State Legislature in 2000, was adopted by the town in 2001. Through a local real property tax surcharge, the town collects and expend funds to maintain its character by supporting open space, affordable housing, recreation lands, and historic preservation initiatives specifically defined by the CPA. The current Hingham CPA surcharge rate is 1.5% and the state matches town funds annually at a varying rate. Hingham was one of the municipalities in Massachusetts to adopt the Act, and since 2003⁷, has awarded funding to 138 projects, roughly half of which fell under the historic preservation category. The CPA is administered in Hingham by the **Community Preservation Committee**, a nine-member body with representatives from the Historical Commission, Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Housing Authority, as well as three citizens at large.

ESTABLISHING CULTURAL DISTRICTS

The Town of Hingham is exploring the impact that creating cultural districts may have for both historic preservation and awareness as well as supporting historic tourism. The initial thinking on the possible Downtown and Harbor Cultural District is that a concentrated effort to connect the Downtown to the Harbor area is needed, and the goal would be to expand regional employment opportunities, bolster the economy and increase historic tourism in Hingham. Physical enhancements could include improved pedestrian ways, coordinated landscape amenities, and the creation of pocket parks throughout, developed to help sustain the Downtown and Harbor area against the damaging effects of climate change.

⁷ Although the town adopted the act in 2001, funding of projects did not take place until 2003. The Community Preservation Coalition website lists projects through 2018.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS: PUBLIC

HINGHAM CULTURAL COUNCIL

The Hingham Cultural Council is part of a network of locally based re-granting entities funded by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency. Hingham's council promotes and supports cultural activities within the town with full or partial grant awards, with the goal of supporting visual and performing arts disciplines, and education activities within each grant cycle. The council gives priority to organizations or individuals residing in Hingham, or to non-residents providing activities within the town. In FY 2020, the council awarded 21 grants, ranging in amounts from \$100 to \$750, to arts, humanities and science organizations.

G.A.R HALL

Located at 358 Main Street at the corner of Pond Street, Hingham's G.A.R. Memorial Hall was designed by a local architect in the Neo-Gothic style and built in 1888 to serve as a meeting place for veterans. Today the facility continues to serve as a meeting and social venue. The Hall also houses historic and wartime memorabilia connected to local and national military history and is open to the public during specified times. Hingham's three G.A.R. Trustees manage the hall, in addition to assisting the town Veterans' Agent with the high school's annual Sophomore Class History Field Day.

MEMORIAL BELL TOWER COMMITTEE

This six-member committee manages the historic Memorial Bell Tower, located at 68B Main Street, adjacent to the Old Ship Church and Hingham Cemetery. The tall brick structure, built in 1912 and dedicated to the settlers of Hingham, houses ten English Change Ringing Bells cast by the former Whitechapel Foundry in London. It is one of only eleven free-standing change-ringing towers in the U. S. In 2018 and 2019, the committee launched an effort to restore all ten of the bell frames and mechanisms, a project supported by Hingham's Community Preservation Committee and Greenbush Historic Preservation Trust. The Bell Town budget is a line item in the Historical Preservation budget and basically covers the cost of electricity.



The Memorial Bell Tower stands above Main Street adjacent to the Old Ship Church. Hingham Public Library Collection.

VETERANS' MEMORIALS

Hingham has sixteen commemorative markers, including stones, plaques, monuments, benches, and a cannon honoring veterans and military personnel, located in parks, squares, cemeteries and on the grounds of public buildings throughout the town. These objects play a central role in celebrations on Memorial and Veterans' Days and serve as a reminder of Hingham's 400-year history of contributing to military service. Currently, the responsibility for managing these objects, including providing regular cleaning, ongoing condition assessment, and, when necessary conservation treatment, is not in the hands of any single town department or committee, but is a proposed line item in the Historical Preservation budget for 2021. There is an eternal flame at the site of the war monuments of Matthew Hawkes Square, which will need someone to maintain it in the near future.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS: PRIVATE

HINGHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The private, non-profit Hingham Historical Society located on Main Street in the Downtown was established in 1914 to collect, preserve, and promote Hingham's historic heritage. The Society maintains the 1686 Old Ordinary, a house museum chronicling early life and history in Hingham, and the 1818 Hingham Heritage Museum in the Old Derby Academy building, once home of the original Derby School, the country's oldest co-educational school. Renovated and reopened in 2017, the Hingham Heritage Museum houses the Society's archives, the second floor Gillis Reading Room, first floor Kelly Gallery, museum shop and visitors

center. Programs include museum tours, an annual tour of historic homes, exhibits, lectures and other special events and programs. The Society presents annual special achievement awards to high school students and to individuals who achieve distinction in the preservation and restoration of historic buildings in Hingham. It also maintains a website that hosts the "Hingham Heritage Map," web-based interactive tool that allows users to locate historic and cultural sites throughout the town. The society collaborates with the Hingham Historical Commission in managing an historic home marker program.



Derby Academy, established in 1784, is the oldest private co-educational school in the US. Today, its original building (1818) is home to the Hingham Historical Society. Hingham Public Library Collection.

HINGHAM CEMETERY

This thirteen-acre historic site, located in the heart of Hingham Square, dates to the 1670s and is the final resting spot for many of Hingham's, and some of the country's prominent citizens, including veterans, political leaders and individuals who helped to build the town. It includes the Settlers' Mound within its grounds. The cemetery contains an arboretum, veterans' area, and many distinctive

gravestones, monuments and historic landscape features. It operates as a private, non-profit organization that hosts tours and a “Dead of the Winter” cultural series, its Ames Chapel, including performances, lectures, and readings by various authors. Events of all types take place at the cemetery’s historic Queen Anne-style Ames Chapel, a building that accommodates up to 120 people (standing). The Chapel is available for rent to Hingham residents at cost.

OTHER HISTORIC CEMETERIES

Six other cemeteries are scattered about the town, and each is owned and managed by a private entity and the condition of their landscapes, including entrances, enclosures, roadways, trees, monuments and markets, varies:

- ***Barnes and Stoddard Cemetery*** (1820), Canterbury Street, also known as the Canterbury Street Cemetery (abandoned and overgrown until recently during construction of an adjacent development, and the town had taken ownership)
- ***Fort Hill Cemetery*** (1751), Fort Hill Street
- ***Glastonbury Abbey Cemetery*** (1978), Hull Street
- ***High Street Cemetery*** (1688), High Street
- ***Liberty Plain Cemetery*** (1739), South Main Street
- ***St. Paul’s Cemetery*** (1859), Hersey Street, owned and managed by the Catholic Church

HINGHAM COMMUNITY CENTER

The Hingham Community Center (HCC) is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of the historic Ensign Thaxter House for the use and benefit of the community. Located at corner of South and Central Streets in Hingham Square, the house was built in 1718 as a family residence, and remained as such until the 1950s, when it was acquired by the HCC (formerly the Wompatuck Club). The HCC offers classes and programs, hosts community events, serves as a venue for private events, and provides a welcoming space for social gathering.

WILDER MEMORIAL HALL

This 1879 Second Empire style building located at 666 Main Street was built via the bequest of Martin Wilder, a resident of South Hingham. Wilder’s last will and testament specified that the bequest be used to set up a school and charitable fund. In 1922, a group of Hingham mothers collaborated on development of a preschool, and in search of a location, approached the Trustees of Wilder Memorial Hall. In 1924, Wilder Memorial Nursery School opened, and continues to operate today. On the building’s second floor are the words “Education - Art - Charity.”

BARE COVE FIRE MUSEUM

Located at 45 Bare Cove Park Drive, this non-profit organization maintains a collection of artifacts, equipment, and documents, including restored motorized fire apparatus, that chronicle the development of firefighting technology as it occurred throughout Hingham and other farming communities, especially in New England.

GARDEN CLUB OF HINGHAM

Established in 1924, the Garden Club of Hingham is a member-based non-profit organization dedicated to beautification of the landscape throughout the town. The organization currently tends garden and

park spaces at the Leavitt entrance to the Hingham Public Library, the Habitat House (Central Street), the Old Ordinary and the traffic islands in Hingham Center. The club has also mapped the trees at More Brewer Park, financed a master landscape plan for the South Shore Country Club and paid for a new design for Jackass Park. The Club is a member of the Federated Garden Clubs of Massachusetts.

SOUTH SHORE CONSERVATORY

South Shore Conservatory (SSC) is the largest community school for the arts in Massachusetts, offering arts education for all ages and levels. Nationally celebrated for its innovative programming, SSC presents more than 100 performances annually. The Conservatory operates from three locations, Duxbury (main campus), Hingham and Hanover. Its Hingham campus, located on Conservatory Drive, boasts an arts-integrated Preschool/PreK/Kindergarten program.

Regional Considerations

- Hingham has the potential to develop as a regional tourist destination, aimed at visitors interested in early American history. This could be achieved, in part, through cooperative marketing and programming with historical organizations in other South Shore towns, including Cohasset, Scituate, Norwell, Marshfield, Duxbury and Plymouth.
- The town has potential to become a laboratory for history and historic preservation scholars interested in studying early American architecture and landscape. This could be achieved through a partnership with an existing academic program of an institution of higher education. Both Boston University and the University of Massachusetts offer advanced degrees in historic preservation.

Issues and Opportunities

- The approaches to Hingham from neighboring towns, or its “gateways” suffer from the lack of clear definition, including poor landscaping and consistent signage. Opportunity exists to improve each of these gateways as a way of welcoming visitors and reinforcing community pride.
- The town has established six local historic districts and five extensions with over 700 homes, representing just 10% of the structures in Hingham. Opportunity exists to establish more districts and/or establish alternative approaches to for preserving historic properties.
- While the Historic Districts Commission has been able to safeguard the exteriors of historic properties within the Local Historic Districts, the interiors have been compromised and will continue to be without additional controls. Many of the interiors contain original fabric that contribute to the history of the town and its historical figures and families. Opportunity exists to protect a select number of properties from interior demolition through negotiated preservation



The Buttonwood Tree (Platanus occidentalis) stands at the intersection of Main and Leavitt Streets, and is believed to be the second oldest tree of its species in Massachusetts. Hingham Public Library Collection.

restrictions/easements. Protection of historic interiors can also occur through education and incentives provided by the town's Preservation Award.

- Sixteen monuments and memorials, honoring veterans and military personnel, stand in parks, squares, and cemeteries throughout Hingham. The condition of these is unknown, and funds have not been regularly allocated to conserve and care for them. Opportunity exists to assess these commemorative objects and raise funds for their upkeep.
- Many of the newcomers to Hingham do not understand the value of old buildings and their settings and the importance of these to town history. While the Historical Commission and Historic Districts Commission have a proactive homeowner education program and updated guidelines for new construction, buyers still value their individual space needs more than the town's need to preserve historic fabric. Opportunity exists for Hingham to reach a compromise between the needs of new homeowners with the responsibilities of the town to preserve its near 400-year history through education programs, both for adults and children.
- Currently, Hingham's Demolition Delay Bylaw applies to all properties not located in historic districts, and in the Inventory of Historic Assets, but only extends for up to six months. In the past, this has not been long enough to prevent removal of historic structures, as since the Bylaw's enactment in the late 1980s, the town has lost roughly half of the buildings reviewed under the Bylaw to demolition after a six-month delay had been imposed. Opportunity exists to lengthen the

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delay period (the state allows up to two years). Opportunity also exists to take additional measures, through various incentives, to encourage property owners to preserve, rather than demolish, their historic properties.

- Residents have raised concern that current zoning, specifically lot coverage, has resulted in historically incompatible changes to neighborhoods – smaller homes are being replaced by very large homes on the same sized lots, increasing density and altering historic development patterns. Opportunity exists to amend the existing zoning bylaw so that historic patterns are retained. Furthermore, the town could create overlay districts in areas where smaller historic houses exist to preserve (or reduce) lot coverages.
- Affordable housing has been a critical issue facing the town, and recent efforts to address this have led to construction of new housing units, such as those developed at the Shipyard. Opportunity exists to provide financial incentives to developers who restore historic properties as affordable housing. Similarly, opportunity exists to provide financial incentives to first-time homeowners to purchase and restore historic properties.
- Currently the town's Scenic Road Regulations focus on the protection of trees, stone walls, and other natural and man-made features of aesthetic value associated with roads or portions thereof. This set of criteria does not adequately protect the most scenic routes of Hingham. Opportunity exists for the town to consider strengthening the act's provisions with additional criteria so that more roads can be protected.
- Hingham has a need for a controlled storage facility to house the many historical records that date back to the town's founding. In addition to a need for archival storage, Hingham's historical records are not currently maintained by one entity and each department has developed its own approach to saving, storing and preserving these. A comprehensive catalogue of records does not exist. Opportunity exists for the town to create a system to archive records and hire a professional archivist to catalogue and maintain them.
- Hingham's Historical Commission has operated without a town-wide historic preservation plan to guide in decision making, both for the commission as well as the Community Preservation Committee. The goals and objectives of the preservation plan would align with those of the Master Plan, but recommendations and action steps would be more detailed. Opportunity exists to create such a guiding document.

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